

## Assessing students' work prior to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

### **Classroom-Based Assessment** - Collection of the Student's Texts

In a similar way to Oral Communication, judgements about the student's work should be made in two stages.

- In the first stage, the teacher makes an initial judgement on whether the student's work has *Yet to reach expectations*. If that descriptor does not match the work, then the teacher moves on to the second stage.
- In the second stage, the student's work is then assessed using the other three descriptors, starting with *In line with expectations* and working up until a descriptor is reached where the work being assessed **clearly does not match all or nearly all** the Features of Quality. The work is then allocated to the preceding descriptor where it is obvious that the student's work matches **all or nearly all** of the Features of Quality.

## Subject Learning and Assessment Review

Greater understanding of standards and expectations will develop over time as teachers come together in professional discussion to reflect on the quality of their own students' work, informed by the subject specification, these guidelines and other support material including annotated examples of students' work provided by the NCCA.

The Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings will play an important role in helping teachers to develop this understanding by enabling them to reflect on the evidence of students' work and to share the learning and teaching strategies supporting that work. The objectives of the review process are to achieve greater consistency of teachers' judgement, better feedback to students and greater alignment of judgements with expected standards. The process of Review will also help to assure parents and others that students are receiving appropriate recognition of their achievements in line with standards and expectations.

Growing understanding of standards over time is also more likely to be developed where teachers use other opportunities they may have – at staff meetings, in-school in-service days or subject department meetings – to discuss examples of student work. This would help to ensure that the review and discussion of student work that takes place at Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings

becomes a familiar feature of the school and contributes to developing assessment and reporting practice across the whole junior cycle.

Where there is a single teacher of a subject in a school, the teacher can be facilitated to participate in a Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting in another school. In the case of an Irish-medium school, the single teacher of a subject can participate in a Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting in another Irish-medium school.

## Inclusive assessment practices

Special provisions may be put in place by schools for a student with a specific physical or learning difficulty to remove as far as possible the impact of the disability on the student's performance in both Classroom-Based Assessments and the Assessment Task so that he or she can demonstrate his or her level of achievement. The accommodations—for example, the use of Irish Sign Language, support provided by a Special Needs Assistant, or the support of assistive technologies— should be in line with the arrangements the school has put in place to support the student's learning throughout the school year and are not designed to compensate for a possible lack of achievement arising from a disability.

## Facilitating the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

Teachers will fulfil the role of facilitator during Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings on a rotational basis. The facilitator will model effective questioning during the discussion of the samples of student work focussing on how well students' work matches the Features of Quality. During review meetings, where it is not clearly evident which Descriptor should apply, the group should look for the evidence in the student's work that matches **all or nearly all** of the Features of Quality associated with a particular Descriptor. This 'best-fit' approach allows teachers at the Review meeting to select the Descriptor that 'on-balance' best matches the work being assessed.

Teachers should not assume that the results of a group of students being assessed will follow any particular distribution plan as the student's work is being judged only against the Features of Quality rather than other students' performance.

## Before the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

As a first step, teachers may find it helpful to review some of the relevant NCCA annotated examples prior to coming to decisions about their own students' work.

Once students have completed their Classroom-Based Assessment, the teacher will carry out a provisional assessment of the students' work based on the Features of Quality. These provisional

assessments may be modified in light of the discussions that take place at the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting.

The teacher will make a note of the Descriptor allocated to each student and any other point they may wish or find useful to refer to during and after the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting. This note will be for the teacher's own use. A sample template for use in compiling the note will be available in the NCCA Assessment Toolkit.

In preparation for the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, each teacher will identify one sample of student's work for each Descriptor, where feasible, and will have these available for discussion at the meeting.

## At the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

The facilitator leads the meeting and keeps the record of the decisions made in a [template](#).

It is recommended that the meeting should generally follow this sequence:

- The facilitator explains that the purpose of the meeting is to support consistency of judgement about students' work and to develop a common understanding about the quality of student learning. The value of the meeting in providing feedback to students on how they might improve their work should also be highlighted.
- The facilitator asks one member of staff to introduce a sample of work they have assessed as *Yet to reach expectations*.
- Following a short introduction by the teacher, the facilitator leads a general discussion on the extent to which the student's work matches the relevant Features of Quality. If the meeting affirms the judgement, this is noted in the meeting record by the facilitator.
- Where there is a lack of agreement, the facilitator should refer to relevant annotated examples of student work provided by the NCCA and, if appropriate, a couple of examples of student work that other teachers in the group have assessed and awarded that Descriptor to.
- The facilitator should look to establish consensus during the discussion of examples but the emphasis should be on developing teachers' professional knowledge and skills rather than on seeking unanimous agreement over every Feature of Quality in every example.
- The emphasis in affirming judgements during the Review meetings should always be on a 'best-fit' approach which allows teachers to agree the Descriptor that 'on-balance' is most appropriate for the work being assessed.

- While reasonable time should be allowed for discussion, the facilitator should use his/her professional judgement to decide when it would be appropriate to proceed to the next sample.
- If possible, there should be discussion of at least two samples for each Descriptor and the facilitator should ensure that each teacher has at least one of their samples discussed during the meeting.
- The process is repeated, in turn, with samples assessed as *In line with expectations*, *Above expectations* and *Exceptional* being discussed and shared in the group. At the end of the meeting, the facilitator briefly summarises the key points from the discussion.
- It's important that each teacher notes the implications of the decisions made during the meeting for the rest of the student work they have already assessed, particularly in the case of Descriptors where their judgement did not align with the view of the majority of teachers at the meeting.
- Advice and support for facilitators in managing the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings will be available in the NCCA Assessment Toolkit.

## After the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting

After the meeting, each teacher considers the assessment of their students' work based on the outcomes of the meeting and, where it is considered necessary, makes the appropriate adjustments to their provisional assessments.

Following the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting, the facilitator generates a short report, focusing on the outcomes of the discussion of student work at the meeting (see the report template at Appendix 3), and submits it to the school principal.

The facilitator may also ask teachers, should they wish, to contribute some of their samples of student work to a bank of examples:

- To support the induction of new teachers
- To support future Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings
- To use with students and parents in demonstrating the standard of work achieved.